



California Institute for
HUMAN SCIENCE
MIND BODY CONSCIOUSNESS UNIVERSITY

THESIS GUIDELINES

Processes, Policies, and Procedures

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CIHS Master of Arts Thesis Guidelines

The CIHS Master's degree thesis is designed for those students who want a research project to be the culmination of their master's degree program. It is basically a mini dissertation or case study that is typically between 40 and 65 pages in length including references. Unless the thesis is approved to explore a topic in a unique fashion, it will have five chapters as follows:

- **Chapter 1:** Introduction – A statement of the problem or investigation at hand (approximately 7-10 pages).
- **Chapter 2:** Literature Review – A comprehensive review of the relevant academic and research literature on the topic (approximately 15-20 pages). This is usually the longest chapter as you research the background, current thinking, and research lens from which to view your research;
- **Chapter 3:** Methodology or Procedure – How are you using research methods – quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods – to conduct the study? There should be a structure or method as derived from books such as Moustakas' *Phenomenological Research Methods* or *Heuristic Research: Design, Methodology, and Applications*, Reason and Rowan's *Human Inquiry: Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research*, or Creswell's *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (approximately 8-10 pages).
- **Chapter 4:** Analysis of the Results – What did you find? How did you discover it? (approximately 10-15 pages).
- **Chapter 5:** Conclusion – What do the results mean? What do they contribute to an understanding of the topic? What are the limitations of the study? What additional research could be pursued at this point? How has the researcher transformed as a result of the research (approximately 5-10 pages).

In addition, the thesis will have appropriate in-text citations for paraphrased and directly quoted research from peer-reviewed journals and other substantive research sources to support your ideas. Non-academic sources can be used in conjunction with scholarly sources when their inclusion is appropriate to the topic or furthers the arguments in some essential way. The thesis should adhere to APA 7th edition style, including a proper title and reference page. The page approximations are

guidelines. However, a student must get approval from their program director should the total length of the thesis exceed 100 pages. Typically, the longest chapters are the Literature Review and the Analysis of the Results.

The student and the thesis supervisor should feel free to adapt the guidelines and even to develop an alternative research format that allows for exploration of the topic in a unique but still rigorous way. The thesis should be an enjoyable journey for both the student and the supervisor, an opportunity to investigate a topic for which the student has a special interest or passion and about which the supervisor, who can assist in shaping the research, may also have a sincere interest.

The student might consider reviewing the document “The Doctoral Dissertation at CIHS” as a way of understanding the expectations for a doctoral-level study. Needless to say, however, the master’s thesis is NOT a doctoral-level research project, and the expectations for the thesis are not as demanding as the expectations for the dissertation. Structurally, the master’s thesis is shorter than a dissertation, and the usual expectations for time to complete the thesis are less than for a dissertation. More importantly, the thesis involves interaction between the student and the supervisor rather than between the student and a three-person dissertation committee. The student should be proactive in driving their research and preparing for meetings with their thesis supervisor. In addition, the thesis is expected to be a meaningful culmination of the master’s degree rather than, as is often the case with a dissertation, the initial research product that establishes an academic or other career and, in fact, sets the research identity of the student as a professional. The thesis, put somewhat differently, should provide time for the student to engage in a meaningful journey into a topic of interest, whereas a dissertation should be one means of launching a professional career.

In order to select a thesis supervisor, who must be a member of the CIHS faculty, the student should seek the assistance of the Program Director and of any faculty whom the student knows and trusts for helpful advice. The student should then approach the faculty member whom he or she wants to serve in the role of supervisor and ask about assuming that role. If the faculty member agrees, the student can proceed. If the faculty member turns down the request, the student should consult with the Program Director about alternative candidates who might serve as the supervisor.

The student and the supervisor who agrees to serve should assume that they have considerable leeway to design and implement the research that constitutes the thesis. Though rigorous, quality research is strongly encouraged and expected, that research will not include the detailed data collection, research scope, carefully elaborated methodological considerations, and in-depth analyses expected of a dissertation. Nor will it be the kind of research that requires an institutional review board (IRB). Students are encouraged to use both qualitative and quantitative (i.e., mixed methods) in their research. Both can be used in simple but meaningful ways without adding lots of time or needing lots of resources. Also, students should be sure to speak to how they themselves have been transformed as a result of conducting the research. These reflections can occur throughout the thesis or be presented in the conclusion. Students can use first-, second-, and third-person voices while writing and do not need to adhere to APA's guidelines for adhering to only the third-person voice. The use of first- and second-person voices should be done in a way that provides additional depth, insight, dimensionality and validity to the overall work.

In lieu of a research project a single, focused, meaningful case study can, assuming the supervisor approves, make for a perfectly acceptable thesis. Likewise, a systematic literature review or a purely theoretical exploration of a topic of interest might also suffice. The student and the supervisor should work together to shape the thesis topic and how it will be explored, asking along the way such questions as:

- What is the focus of the research and why is it important?
- How can the topic be explored most meaningfully, successfully, and within the span of no more than a year?
- How will the research contribute to a recognized knowledge base or literature, or how will it help explore new directions in theory and research?
- How can the research be pursued so that it can be managed reasonably in terms of time, resources, and expectations for completion?
- What are timelines for the components of the research?
- What obstacles might emerge that should be anticipated but also averted if possible?
- How will the student and the supervisor interact to ensure that the research stays on track?

- In what ways will the research potentially add to the literature, to a field or discipline, and/or to the wellbeing of people and society?

At the initiation of the research, the student and the supervisor would do well to develop a proleptic abstract – that is, a one-page summary at the start of what the study will treat when it has been completed.